



THE CANADIAN EPWORTH ERA

Vol. XV.

S. T. BARTLETT, Editor
WM. BRIGGS, Publisher

TORONTO, MARCH, 1913

WESLEY BUILDINGS
TORONTO, ONTARIO

No. 3

A TRIP THROUGH THE LUTHER COUNTRY

I. EISLEBEN—THE BIRTH-PLACE OF THE REFORMER

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It was on a bright, breezy morning in May that I took train from Halle for Eisleben. An hour's run brought me to the station and a fifteen minute walk down a winding road brought me to the town. Bordering the roadway were beautiful villas of modern style and decidedly modern material; but I had no sooner reached the town proper than I seemed to be transported back to the 16th century.

In reality there are two towns, as at Nuremberg, one within the other—one mediæval, the other modern. The old town still looks as it did four centuries ago. Unchanged are the streets paved with rough, cobble stones. Unchanged are the queer old dwellings and shops that overhang the narrow winding streets. The roofs patched and re-patched, are everywhere in evidence, with their queer little windows stuck here and there up to the very peak.

On this particular morning preparations were in progress for the Pentecost festivities. Men and women were sweeping the streets with coarse brooms! window were being washed, green boughs were being set up in houses, shops and churches. The Germans, to this day, keep up the celebration of this church festival in imitation of the ancient Jewish method.

An eight-day vacation from university lectures had given me this opportunity of visiting "The Luther Country," and the occasion was made doubly interesting by the opportunity it gave me of studying, in this rural community, the customs of the people. After all one does not see Germany, nor does he get to know

German life, by simply visiting a few of the larger cities.

Eisleben, to-day, boasts of a population of some 30,000. It is situated in the County of Mansfeld, in Saxony, and is the centre of a district rich in copper ore. Mining has for centuries been the chief industry of the district. In itself the town is interesting enough and pretty enough to repay a visit; but what drew me to the place was not its industries, nor its natural beauty, but the fact that it was the birthplace of Martin Luther.

former first saw the light still stands. The date of his birth was November 10th, 1483. What the street was then called I do not know, but it is now called after the man who made the town famous. At 16 Luther Strasse a tablet may be seen commemorating his birthday.

With an American student from Marburg University, who was my travelling companion, I climbed the stair leading to the "birth room," paid the fat-cheeked German maiden the usual fee and was shown the books, MSS., and other

momentoes that have transformed this rudely-furnished room into a "Luther museum."

Later we visited the Church of St. Peter and St. Paul, in the rear of the birth-house, where the infant was baptized the day after his birth, and in which he afterward preached his Reformation doctrines. The day on which he was baptized was the feast of St. Martin. It was this coincidence that gave the boy his name.

Farther down the street and near the market-place we visited the house where Luther died. Not far distant is the Church of St. Andrew, where he preached his last sermon, and in the market-place stands a statue, designed by

Slernerung, and erected in 1883 to his memory.

Little did the townsfolk of Eisleben know on that night in November, 1483, that the babe born to those humble Saxon peasants was to make their little town famous.

Crowded out by the thrush of miners, Hans Luther, with his wife and babe, left Eisleben when the child was but six months old, and removed to Mansfeld, about six miles distant. Here the early



HOUSE IN WHICH MARTIN LUTHER WAS BORN.

Photo by Mr. Malott.

It was the mining industry that drew Hans and Margaret Luther (or Luder, as they were then called) hither in the year 1483. They had lived at Möhra, among the Thuringian hills, near Eisenach, a mining district also. But the richer mines of Mansfeld county attracted these sturdy Saxon peasants northward. At Eisleben they settled first. Here they made a brief stay, but during that brief sojourn their eldest son Martin was born. The old house in which the great Re-